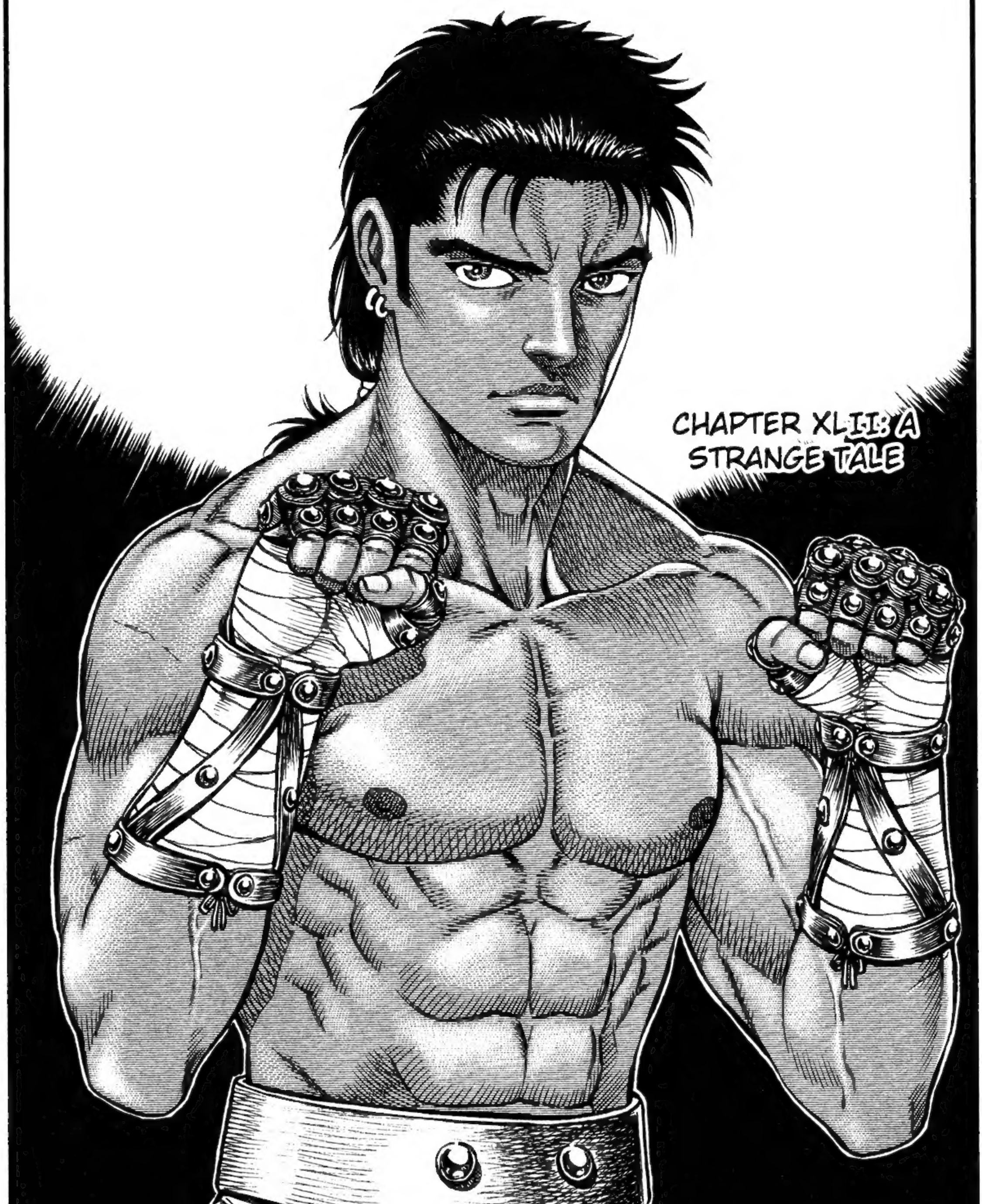
CHAPTER XLII: A STRANGE TALE

THE ARENA.

UNDER-GROUND WAITING ROOM.

DO A GOOD JOB FIGHTING AND WE'LL RAKE IN LOADS YOU LOT!

THERE'S A TON OF SPECTATORS COMING!

IS IT ALRIGHT IF I ASK A QUESTION CESTVS?

IF YOU DON'T WANNA ANSWER IT'S FINE.

SORRY...

BEFORE YOU GO...

AND ENTER A MATCH?

JUST HOW DO YOU FEEL...

THE AIR AROUND YOU FEELS HEAVIER AND THICKER THAN NORMAL.

IT'S REALLY SUFFOCATING.

HOW YOU'LL BE DEFEATED...

YOU CAN'T HELP BUT THINK ABOUT SUCH THINGS.

IF YOUR ATTACKS AREN'T EFFECTIVE THEN...

WHO KNOWS HOW MUCH PAIN YOU'LL END UP IN...

YOUR MIND'S UNEASY...

YOU DON'T KNOW HOW STRONG YOUR OPPONENT WILL BE...

...

YOUR HEAD AND KNEES SHAKE, LIKE THEY'RE NOT A PART OF YOUR BODY.

THE MORE THE HEAVY AIR SEEMS TO CLING TO YOU.

THE MORE YOU THINK ABOUT IT...

SO YOU NEED TO GET MOVING!

IF YOU THINK TOO MUCH YOU'LL FULLY FREEZE UP.

ONCE YOU START THROWING SOME PUNCHES IT'LL DRIVE THE WEAK AIR FROM YOUR BODY!

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YOU'LL BE ABLE TO MOVE PROPERLY AGAIN.

IF YOU RECALL THE TIMES YOU WERE PRAISED.

THAT'S WHAT MASTER TAUGHT ME.

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I CAN MOVE.

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KEEP DOING IT, OVER AND OVER TO MAKE SURE.

I CAN DO IT.

I CAN FIGHT.

KEEP TELLING YOURSELF...

THAT IT'LL BE OKAY.

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HONESTLY, YOU CAN'T BE AT EASE...

RIGHT BEFORE A MATCH.

AND EVEN THEN...

YOUR UNEASE STILL WON'T VANISH.

...

...

I'M...

GOING TO LOOK FOR MASTER.

WERE IT POSSIBLE TO FLEE YOU WOULD LOVE TO...

IF I...

EVEN STAND IN FRONT OF A CROWD I FREEZE UP.

IT'S JUST IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO FIGHT...

THERE'S AN INTENSE PRESSURE...

COMING FROM THE MATCH...

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WE AIN'T BEEN SENT OUT FOR A FIGHT YET...

LET'S RELAX!

THERE AIN'T NO NEED TO BE SO DOWN!

IT'S SO DAMP, AND IT REEKS OF MOLD...

STILL, THIS IS A HORRIBLE, DARK PLACE.

?!

IN THIS ARENA...

HOW THEY SEND OUT A MONSTER TO FIGHT...

HEY, DO YOU LOT KNOW ABOUT IT?

A... A MONSTER THOUGH...?

THEY SAY THE ARENA HERE IS ANCIENT.

I HEARD IT WHEN WE WAS COMING INTO TOWN.

EH...

WHY'D YOU HAVE TO GO AND SAY THAT RANDOMLY...

THEY SAY IT'S BEEN LOCKED UP IN AN UNDERGROUND CELL FOR YEARS.

IT'S A REAL HIDEOUS FIEND WHICH IS MEANT TO EAT RAW FLESH AND SLURP UP BLOOD.

THE ROMANS SHOWERED THEM WITH ALL SORTS OF CURSES AND HATRED.

YEARS AGO THERE WAS A REBELLION. IN THE AFTERMATH THEY EXECUTED A FEMALE SLAVE, YET FROM HER BELLY...

CAME TWINS...

A BOY AND A GIRL.

THEY WEREN'T KILLED, BUT...

THEY WERE TREATED HIDEOUSLY.

THEIR LIVES WERE MEANT TO SHOW A LESSON.

THEY NEVER GOT NO CLOTHES, AND WEREN'T TAUGHT HOW TO SPEAK. THEY WERE BOUND WITH CHAINS AND RAISED IN A TINY CATTLE HUT.

NOT AS HUMANS BUT BEASTS!

AND A CURSED CHILD WAS BORN FROM THE PAIR.

AT LENGTH THEY GREW OLDER.

WITH EACH GENERATION THE CHILDREN'S FORMS BECAME ALL THE MORE HORRIFIYINGLY DISTORTED.

THEIR FAMILY WAS RAISED IN A SIMILAR WAY FOR GENERATIONS.

IT EVENTUALLY BECAME TOO TERRIFYING FOR THE CITY'S INHABITANTS...

ONLY ONE BOY WAS LEFT ALIVE...

AND MOST OF THE SIBLINGS' DESCENDANTS WERE KILLED.

THEY SAY HE'S KEPT IN A CELL BELOW THE ARENA...

GOT YOU SCARED, GOT YOU SCARED!

HYAHAHA...

SO IT WAS A LIE?

THAT'S JUST NASTY GOSSIP!

WHAT A LOAD OF CRAP! WHO'D BELIEVE THAT...?!

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HAH.

WHO'D BELIEVE THAT?

YOU'D HAVE TO BE A RIGHT IDIOT.

WEEELL, WHO KNOWS. WAS JUST SOMETHING I HEARD COMING HERE.

OF COURSE I DON'T BELIEVE IT...

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MM...

I GUESS MASTER AIN'T COMING...

I REMEMBER THAT NICKNAME.

NUMIDIA'S BOXING WOLF...

IN MY HEAD I JUST DIDN'T CONNECT...

YOUR PAST SELF WITH YOUR PRESENT SELF.

YOU'VE REALLY CHANGED MASSIVELY...

...

YOU WOULDN'T KNOW ABOUT ME.

HOW COULD YOU?

AND YOU ARE...?

I WAS A RUNNY NOSE NOVICE IN AWE OF THE FIGHTS.

BACK THEN I'D NOT EVEN FOUGHT FIVE TIMES. I WAS STILL A ROOKIE.

WHEREAS YOU WERE IN YOUR GLORIOUS GOLDEN AGE.

TO MY EYES YOU WERE A DAZZLING SIGHT, LIKE A HERO OF LEGEND.

IT WAS LIKE A GOD WAS THERE, SHOWING ME HIS PROWESS.

EACH AND EVERY BLOW YOU MADE WAS UTTERLY DEVASTATING!

THAT VIGOUR, THAT FIGHTING STRENGTH, THAT CUNNING STRATEGY!

AFTER A FIGHT, YOU ALONE WOULD SHOW OFF A REBELLIOUS NATURE.

YOU WERE DIFFERENT TO EVERYONE ELSE...

NOT JUST IN FIGHTING TECHNIQUE...

THE SIGHT OF YOU STOOD THERE ALONE, AT THOSE EVENTS...

FIGHTING FOR YOUR LIFE, WAS BURNED INTO MY VISION.

I LONGED...

TO BECOME LIKE YOU...

YET I HAD BUT ONE TARGET FOREVER IN MIND.

AFTER THAT, I TRAVELLED ALL OVER TO FIGHT.

NO MATTER WHERE I WENT OR LOOKED, THERE WAS NO GREATER FIGHTER THAN NUMIDIA'S BOXING WOLF.

HOW IN THE WORLD DID THIS HAPPEN?!

WHY ARE YOU STILL IN A PLACE LIKE THIS?!

AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, IT'S POINTLESS IF YOU'RE NOT PERFECT.

I'D BEEN TRYING TO MAKE MY OWN NAME FOR A COMPLETE VICTORY.

AND WHAT'S THAT?!

WHAT'S WITH THIS PATHETIC STATE OF YOURS?!

UNDEFEATED, UNINJURED.

YOU SHOULD'VE EARNED YOUR FREEDOM A LIFETIME AGO!

YOU'RE REALLY QUITE THE NUISANCE.

GOOD GRIEF, YOU CERTAINLY TALK RATHER BITTERLY.

I'VE NO REASON TO FLEE FROM IT.

I DON'T CARE FOR YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES.

AND I DON'T RECALL FIGHTING FOR THE SAKE OF SOME COPYCAT.

WHAT WAS THAT?

SO WHAT OF IT?

AND YOU FREELY ENDED UP DISSAPOINTED WITH ME.

YOU FREELY CHOSE TO ADMIRE ME.

TO CARE FOR THE SENTIMENTS OF OTHERS.

YOU'VE NO LEEWAY...

IF YOU'RE A SLAVE BOXER YOU SHOULD KNOW TOO.

YET IN THE END MY STRENGTH WASN'T ENOUGH, AND I LOST MY DREAM.

NOWS ALL THAT'S LEFT IS THIS ENCHAINED BODY.

YET I'VE NO REGRETS.

I FOUGHT FOR MY OWN SAKE...

AS MUCH AS I COULD...

UNTIL I HAD NO STRENGTH LEFT.

YOU MUST DO, THAT'S WHY YOU'RE TRAINING THAT KID.

WELL, AM I WRONG?

ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY I WAS JUST COMPLAINING LIKE SOME NO GOOD BRAT?

WAS THAT MEANT TO BE AN OLD MAN'S WISDOM?

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GEEZ, WHAT A FINE SPEECH...

BUT IT WAS A LIE...

THAT YOU'VE NO REGRETS WAS ONE GREAT FACADE.

I CAN'T DIE UNTIL I TIDY UP MY UNFINISHED BUSINESS.

IT'S MY DUTY TO GUIDE HIM TO FREEDOM.

CESTVS IS MY DEBT.

CESTVS IS...

DEBT? DUTY?

WHAT'S THAT, I DON'T GET IT.

SEEMS A BIT SERIOUS DON'T IT.

WHAT DOES HE MEAN?!

THE MATCH'LL BE SOON.

WELL... AIN'T NOTHING TO DO WITH ME.

IT'S A SHAME YOU CAN'T FIGHT THOUGH.

...

OH...

AH...

...

THE LITLE BUGGER WAS HAVING A CHEEKY LISTEN.

IF IT AIN'T THE KID.

...

OUR HUMBLEST APOLOGIES FOR KEEPING YOU WAITING.

WE SHALL NOW BEGIN THE FIRST MATCH!

GO AND SNATCH A CLEAR WIN FROM THE GODDESS OF VICTORY!

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GO ON NEWBIE, YOU CAN BE FIRST!

CHAPTER XLII: A STRANGE TALE - END